

The Ceramic Art of Paul Bogatay

By

James L. Murphy



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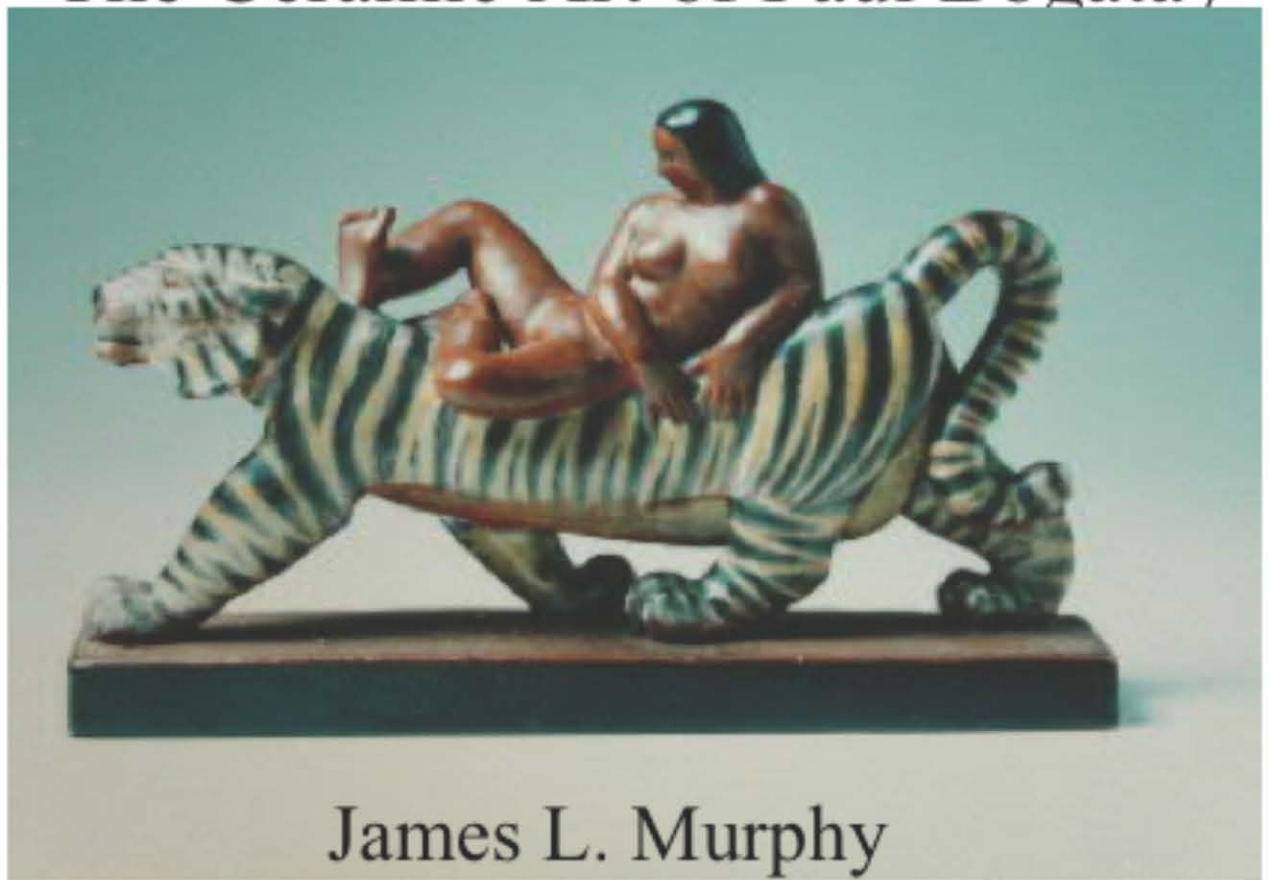
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Grove City, Ohio

Note

This is a slightly modified version of a presentation given at the 2003 Cowan Symposium held at the Rocky River Public Library. I thank the Cowan Pottery Museum at Rocky River Public Library and the Cowan Pottery Museum Associates for inviting me to make the presentation.

The Ceramic Art of Paul Bogatay



James L. Murphy
Cowan Symposium 2003

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I AM BY NO MEANS AN AUTHORITY ON PAUL BOGATAY AND HIS ART BUT HAVE BENEFITTED GREATLY FROM KNOWING SEVERAL REAL EXPERTS—HIS WIDOW, HENRIETTA OR “HENNY” BOGATAY, NOW A SPRITELY 94 YEARS OLD—AND HIS CHILDREN, LUCIA OR “CIA” AND TODD BOGATAY.

FORTUITOUSLY, WHEN I BOUGHT MY FIRST SIGNED BOGATAY POT, I LEARNED THAT A FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE AT THE OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, JOAN JONES, HAD GONE TO GRADE SCHOOL WITH CIA BOGATAY AND REMAINED FRIENDS WITH THE FAMILY, THOUGH THEY ARE WIDELY SCATTERED. EVENTUALLY, I HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO MEET BOTH HENNY AND CIA BOGATAY, AND

MUCH OF WHAT I RELATE COMES DIRECTLY FROM THEM AND FROM A SKETCH OF HIS FATHER WRITTEN BY TODD BOGATAY.

ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS DUE MARY JO BOLE, PRUDENCE GILL, AND STEVE THURSTON FROM THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ART, FOR PROVIDING ACCESS TO BOGATAY PIECES AND PHOTOGRAPHS. VICTORIA NAUMANN PELTZ AND MARK BASSETT ALSO PROVIDED CONSIDERABLE USEFUL INFORMATION ON BOGATAY'S TIES TO COWAN POTTERY.

Beginnings: Ava and After

Dirigible *Shenandoah* Wreck: Ava, Ohio's, Most Notable Event, 1925



This disaster far eclipsed the birth of Paul Joseph Bogatay, July 5, 1905, to John and Lucia (Rosa) Tokar Bogatay. And by 1925 the Bogatays had long been residents of Cleveland, Ohio.

PAUL JOSEF BOGATAY WAS BORN JULY 5 1905, IN THE SMALL COAL-MINING TOWN OF AVA, NOBLE COUNTY, OHIO, JUST INSIDE THE FRINGE OF APPALACHIA. HIS PARENTS WERE YUGOSLAVIAN AND CZECH IMMIGRANTS WHO HAD MOVED THERE AROUND 1904, WHERE FATHER JOHN WORKED IN THE COAL MINES UNTIL HE WAS BLINDED BY A MINING ACCI-

DENT. HE LATER OPERATED A GROCERY FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND IS SO LISTED IN THE 1910 CENSUS. AVA IS BEST KNOWN AS THE SITE OF THE SHENANDOAH DIRIGIBLE CRASH IN 1925 AND A HISTORICAL MARKER COMMEMORATES THIS DISASTER BUT THERE IS NO SIGN PROCLAIMING AVA THE BIRTHPLACE OF PAUL BOGATAY.

BY 1925 (BY 1920, ACTUALLY), THE BOGATAY FAMILY HAD MOVED TO CLEVELAND, OHIO, WHERE JOHN BOGATAY WAS A BROOMMAKER AND ROSA BOGATAY ALSO WORKED TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY. PAUL ATTENDED EAST TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE, AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, GUY COWAN HAD DEVELOPED THE CERAMICS PROGRAM AT EAST TECH, ALTHOUGH HE HAD LEFT TO FORM COWAN POTTERY BY THE TIME PAUL BOGATAY WOULD HAVE BEEN IN HIGH SCHOOL. AT THIS POINT MRS. EVA B. PALMER, WHO WAS THE WIDOW OF A PROMINENT CLEVELAND ATTORNEY AND ALSO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR THE CLEVELAND SOCIETY

FOR THE BLIND, AIDED THE BOGATAYS BY PROVIDING HOUSING AND SEEING THAT PAUL COULD ATTEND THE CLEVELAND SCHOOL OF ART.

BOGATAY CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF ARTHUR BAGGS, AND IN FACT THE EARLIEST PAUL BOGATAY PIECE KNOWN IS A 1928 VASE THROWN BY ARTHUR BAGGS AND, AT HIS SUGGESTION, DECORATED BY BOGATAY, A FITTING SYMBOL OF THE INFLUENCE BAGGS

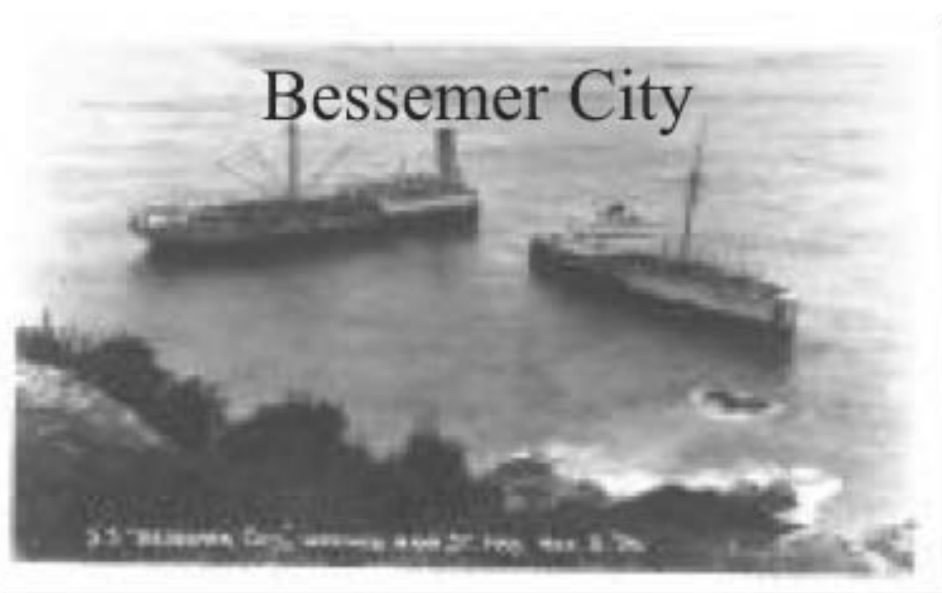
Before Cowan



Bowl thrown by Arthur Baggs and decorated by Bogatay while a student at Cleveland Institute of Art, ca. 1928

Bogatay family

WAS TO HAVE UPON THE YOUNGER POTTER. WHILE BOGATAY ATTENDED THE CLEVELAND SCHOOL OF ART HIS SUMMERS WERE SPENT WORKING AS ORDINARY SEAMAN ON GREAT LAKES ORE BOATS; BUT FROM 1928 THROUGH 1930 HE ALSO HELD SCHOLARSHIPS AT THE LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY FOUNDATION STUDIOS AT OYSTER BAY, LONG ISLAND.



The S.S. Bessemer City Ran Aground in 1939 Outbound from Liverpool to London, England.

Courtesy Brian Olivey

IN 1929 HE SAILED AROUND THE WORLD AS ABLE BODIED SEAMAN ON THE FREIGHTER S.S. BESSEMER CITY, STUDYING NOT ONLY NATIVES BUT ALSO LOCAL ANIMALS. UPON HIS RETURN TO CLEVELAND BOGATAY WAS HIRED BY THE COWAN POTTERIES AS A DESIGNER. NEARLY EVERYTHING THAT WE KNOW OF HIS BRIEF TENURE THERE IS CONTAINED IN MARK BASSETT AND NAUMANN PELTZ'S BOOK ON COWAN POTTERY. A FEW OTHER PIECES ARE ATTRIBUTED BY THE BOGATAY FAMILY TO HIS COWAN PERIOD BUT NONE OF THESE DESIGNS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PRODUCED.

Bogatay's Medusa Vase



Calkins Collection. Photo courtesy of Mark Bassett and Victoria Naumman, 1997, Pl. 553.



Steve Schoneck Collection
Photo courtesy of
Wisconsin Pottery
Association
(<http://www.wisconsinpottery.org>)

Bogatay Airplane Vase



**Designed at Cowan
1930**

Photo courtesy of Bassett and
Naumann 1997, Pl. 554

“Lady of the Lake” Flower Frog



Bogatay Family

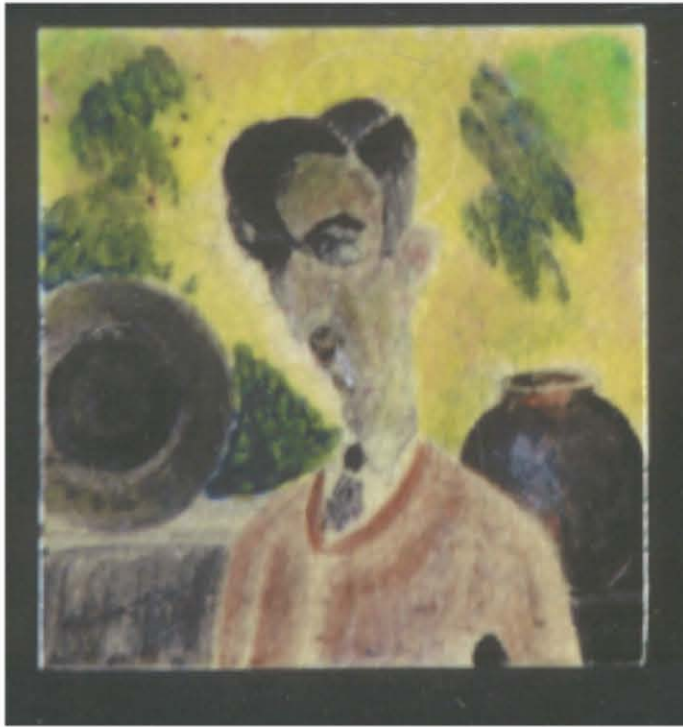
IN 1930, ARTHUR BAGGS, WHOM COWAN HAD RECOMMENDED TO HEAD THE CERAMICS PROGRAM AT OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, LURED BOGATAY TO OSU WITH A TWO YEAR GRANT (\$8000) FROM THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION INTENDED TO IMPROVE THE DESIGN AND DECORATION OF AMERICAN WHITEWARE OR TABLEWARE. THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND HESITATION ON THE PART OF DINNERWARE MANUFACTURERS LARGELY DEFEATED THIS ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE NEW DESIGNS.

Rockefeller Foundation Grant
“Experiments in Better Tableware”



Arthur E. Baggs and Richard F. Bach flank
Guy Cowan at a Ceramics National Competition

Design Magazine



Bogatay caricature of Baggs

OSU Dept. of Art



Baggs thrown jug. 1934

Private Collection

DURING THIS PERIOD (1932-1938) BOGATAY ALSO WORKED WITH BAGGS AT MARBLEHEAD POTTERY AND NUMEROUS PIECES CAN BE IDENTIFIED OR ATTRIBUTED WITH SOME CERTAINTY TO THIS PERIOD IN HIS CAREER.

Marblehead Pottery



1931-1934

Bogatay Family

WHEN THE ROCKEFELLER GRANT ENDED, BOGATAY CONTINUED AS A FREE-LANCE DESIGNER AT VARIOUS CERAMICS FACTORIES. THESE INCLUDED ROBINSON RANSBOTTOM, STEUBENVILLEPOTTERY, HARKER POTTERY, PADEN CITY POTTERY, AND HOMER LAUGHLIN. WITH TWO EXCEPTIONS, NONE OF THIS WORK HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED. ALSO, IN 1932 HE MARRIED HENRIETTA BEECHER CUNNINGHAM, A TOLEDO NATIVE WITH ROOTS IN COLUMBUS AND AN M.A. STUDENT IN SCULPTURE.



Bogatay Tableware Designs

Two Early Bogatay
Dinnerware Designs
1933 and 1935.

Bogatay Family





Additional Bogatay Dinnerware Designs 1935

Bogatav Family

Two Redware Plates, 1934



Private collection

AROUND 1936, BOGATAY BEGAN DESIGNING FOR THE FORD CERAMIC ARTS COMPANY, A SMALL MANUFACTURER OF SOUVENIR AND DINNERWARE ORIGINALLY LOCATED ON THE OSU CAMPUS. FORD HAD RECEIVED A DEGREE IN CERAMIC ENGINEERING IN 1930 AND DEVELOPED A TECHNIQUE FOR PRODUCING PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES IN RELIEF OR INTAGLIO ON CERAMICS. SOME OF BOGATAY'S DESIGNS ARE FAMILIAR, OTHERS ARE ENTIRELY NEW. THE USE OF SOLID BRIGHT COLORS AND PARTICULARLY THE USE OF CONCENTRIC RAISED RIDGES CERTAINLY BRINGS TO MIND HOMER LAUGHLIN'S POPULAR FIESTA WARE. (HENNY BOGATAY THOUGHT THAT FREDERICK RHEAD MAY HAVE GIVEN THE BOGATAYS A SET OF FIESTA WARE AS A WEDDING PRESENT BUT THE BOGATAYS MARRIED FOR YEARS BEFORE FIESTA WARE WAS INTRODUCED.) NONE OF FORD CERAMIC ARTS' DINNERWARE PROVED TO BE ESPECIALLY POPULAR, ALTHOUGH BOGATAY WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE THE STEUBENVILLE POTTERY TO PRODUCE THE NEW YORK CITY SOUVENIR PLATES

(1939), AND THE PADEN CITY (WEST VIRGINIA) POTTERY TRIED PRODUCING A SOLID BLUE BLUE WILLOW DESIGN. THE PROCESS WAS ESSENTIALLY TOO COMPLICATED TO BE COST EFFECTIVE IN DINNERWARE PRODUCTION. FORD WAS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THE OPERATION AND LOST INTEREST IN THE COMPANY, WHICH ENDED WITH WORLD WAR II, DURING WHICH BOGATAY TAUGHT CAMOUFLAGE DESIGN AND DEVELOPED CERAMIC HEATING ELEMENTS WHILE CONTINUING HIS TEACHING AT OHIO STATE.

Paden City Blue Willow Cup



Utilizing the Ford Process

Ford Ceramic Arts

Walter D. Ford (1906-1988)



Ceramic Engineering
graduate of Ohio State (1930)
“Flivver” Ford began Ford
Ceramic Arts in the
mid-1930s on the OSU
campus, with Bogatay as art
director.

Ford Ceramic Art Buttons



Designed by Bogatay

OSU Dept. of Art

Earliest Datable Example of Ford Ceramic Arts



“Commemorating the
Coronation of His Majesty
King Edward VIII May
Twelfth Nineteen Hundred
and Thirty Seven”

The more formidable Miss Frances E. Willard



A Ford Ceramic Arts Plate
Honoring her Centenary,
1839-1939

UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST COMMON EXAMPLE
OF FORD CERAMIC ARTS WARE, IF NOT THE
MOST ARTISTIC.



Ford Ceramic Art produced much souvenir ware such these miniature vases for The Ohio Historical Society's sites at Schoenbrunn and Campus Martius.

Ford Mt Vernon Lamp Base



Private Collection

Steubenville China New York Souvenir Plate



Attempts to interest dinnerware manufacturers in the Ford Process were not particularly successful due to the complicated nature of the process.

Bogatay's Marblehead "Evangeline" Design Later Used



By Ford Ceramic Art

Bogatay Family



Private Collection

THE DESIGN ALSO OWES SOMETHING TO THE "BLUE WILLOW," MOTIF, PERHAPS A PREFIGURING OF BOGATAY'S INTEREST IN THE FAR EAST.

Ford also produced more artistic work under their ARS logo





Private Collection

TWO OF THE MORE RARE PRODUCTS OF
FORD CERAMIC ART DESIGNED BY
BOGATAY

Bogatay's fondness for ships



produced this popular tea tile or trivet, one of the more common Ford Ceramics Art pieces.

Columbus and Ohio State University

Bogatay in his studio ca.
1936.



The Bogatay Home for Much of the Columbus Years



45 West Weisheimer

OSU's Commemorative Plates designed by Bogatay 1931



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First announced to Ohio State Alumni only a few weeks ago in the Directory Issue of the Ohio State University MONTHLY, subscriptions for this limited edition of Beautiful Ohio State Plates are coming in to the Committee with surprising promptness. . . .

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SIZE: Ten and one-quarter inches

USES: Luncheon, dinner, or bridge plates; place or service plates; purely decorative purposes

SOLD: Only by subscription with deposit; in complete sets of twelve plates

SCENES: Sets contain two of each scene—The Stadium, Orton Tower, The Armory, Pomerene Hall, University Hall, The Library

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PAYMENT: Deposit of five dollars on each dozen with subscription; balance of seven dollars when notified that plates are ready for shipment

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☐ Staffordshire Blue ☐ Green ☐ Crimson

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Name..... Class.....

Address

City and State

1931 African Chess Set



Bogatay Family

“Leopard”



First Prize 1932 Cleveland May Show

Bogatay Family

“Javanese Mother and Child”



First Prize 1936
5th Ceramic National

First Prize 1937
Columbus Art League

“NEPHSY”



An advertising piece for the
Great Lakes Foundry Sand
Co., producers of Lakefield
nepheline syenite from a
mine at Nephton, Ontario.
Introduced in 1937.

“Nephsy” would resurface a few years later as
colorful figurines produced by Littlefield Kilns

Edgar Littlefield



A Littlefield Floral
Charger, 1944



Littlefield Vase 1940

FOLLOWING THE END OF THE WAR, BOGATAY BECAME A FULL PROFESSOR AT OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY IN 1946. TEACHING AND ART WERE THE FOCUS OF HIS LIFE. IN A PERIOD OF SOME FORTY YEARS HE EXHIBITED HIS WORK IN MORE THAN 80 SHOWS AND WON AT LEAST 40 MAJOR PRIZES. ALTHOUGH HE MAINTAINED HIS INTEREST IN DINNERWARE DESIGN, HE WAS INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED FOR AND BECAME INCREASINGLY FOCUSED ON HIS CERAMIC SCULPTURE. HIS INCOME WAS SUPPLEMENTED TO SOME EXTENT BY PRODUCING SOUVENIR

WARE AND NICKNACKS THROUGH THE LITTLEFIELD KILNS, WHICH WERE OPERATED IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIS OSU COLLEAGUE, EDGAR LITTLEFIELD. EXCEPT FOR A MUTUAL INTEREST IN GLAZES, THE TWO POTTERS APPEAR TO HAVE HAD LITTLE IN COMMON, LITTLEFIELD, DESPITE HIS REPUTATION, SEEMS TO HAVE POSSESSED NOTHING LIKE BOGATAY'S SENSE OF DESIGN, NOR HIS INTEREST IN CERAMIC SCULPTURE.

“Elephant”



1938

Thomas C. Folk Collection

AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF BOGATAY'S COMBINING
REALISM AND IMAGINATION

BOGATAY'S INTEREST IN EXOTIC FAUNA CONTINUED THROUGH THE 1930S AND 1940S, INDEED THROUGHOUT THE REST OF HIS LIFE.

“Leopard Plate”



1946 First Prize,
Columbus Art
League

1947 First Prize,
Dayton Art
Institute

Bogatay Family

Punch Bowl 1946



Bogatay Family

The Lady and The Tiger



1945

Bogatay Family

PERHAPS BOGATAY'S BEST KNOWN WORK— CERTAINLY HIS MOST INSOUCIANT. I TREASURE A SMILE I BROUGHT TO HENNY BOGATAY BY INGENUOUSLY ASKING IF SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE MODEL FOR THE LADY.

“Baboon 1”



1947 Purchase Prize
National Decorative Arts Ceramic Exhibition,
Wichita Art Association

“Bull”



First Prize of Ceramic Sculpture, Columbus Art League, 1947

“Head Vase”



Ca. 1945

Private Collection

“Head”



1947 Ceramic National

Bogatay Famil

“Night” (“Hills of Ohio”)



1948 First Prize Columbus Art League

Bogatay Family

Communism in Art

In the mid-1940s Bogatay experimented with abstract forms and published a short article



Bogatay Family

“The Shape of Things To Come”

in the Ohio State University Extension Bulletin (1945), espousing slab-built sculptural forms that could not be created on the traditional potter’s wheel. One fellow from Cincinnati opined that this radical view was nothing less than “Communism in art,” and the OSU student newspaper took the story and ran with it.

THE BOGATAYS WERE AMUSED BUT IT WAS NOT A JOKING MATTER, AND HENNY LATER WONDERED IF IT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROBLEMS PAUL HAD IN GETTING HIS VISA WHEN HE WAS AWARDED A FULBRIGHT TO STUDY IN JAPAN.

Japan



In 1955 Bogatay was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study in Japan. This was to have a profound effect upon his work.

IN 1961 BOGATAY WOULD SAY, "MY TIME SPENT IN TRAVELLING HAD A DEFINITE EFFECT UPON MY CREATIVE WORK AND MY TEACHING. IT WAS A POWERFUL LESSON IN TECHNIQUE AND MY CONTACT WITH THE ORIENT ESPECIALLY TAUGHT ME THE MEANING OF TRUE CREATIVITY. EVERYTHING IN THE ORIENT IS A WORK OF ART AND ONE CANNOT HELP BUT BE INFLUENCED BY THESE MASTERS OF ART AND BEAUTY."



“Bogatay ’66”

Bogatay Family

“PB ’66”

Bogatay Family



“Urn With Lid”



1959

Bogatay Family



Ca. 1963

Bogatay Family



1961



1962

Bogatay Family

“Violet Pot”



Undated

Private Collection



“Bogatay ’63”

Bogatay Family

“Three Part Vase”



Undated

Private Collection



Ca. 1958
Bogatay Family



1960 Private Collection



"Fish Bowl," Bogatay, 1966.

1966 Bogatay Family

Ebco/Oasis Plaque



DESIGNED FOR THE LOBBY OF THE EBCO MANUFACTURING CO.,
COLUMBUS, OHIO

Ebco "The Water Hole"



1955

The Ohio Stater Plaques



(COURTESY THE LANTERN)

IN 1961 BOGATAY WAS COMMISSIONED TO CREATE A SERIES OF 11 CERAMIC PLAQUES COMMEMORATING THE TEN OSU COLLEGES AND THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Damaged Ohio Stater Reject



Bogatay Family

Renovated Ohio Stater Inn



THE PLAQUES WERE LATER REMOVED FROM THE OHIO STATER INN TO BE USED IN THE OWNER'S GARDEN. PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH THEM WAS REFUSED.

Final Years

Stoneware Gorilla: His Last Major Work



Steve Thurston, OSU Dept. of Art

“Hippo” 1972



Bogatay Family

THE LAST PIECE CREATED BY PAUL BOGATAY

Teaching



Two Pieces by Bogatay Student Hal Fromhold
Private Collection

HENRY FERDINAND FROMHOLD (1918-1975) RECEIVED AN M.A. DEGREE FROM OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY IN 1959. BOGATAY WAS FROMHOLD'S THESIS ADVISOR. THE THESIS WAS TITLED "AN EXPLORATION OF MULTIPLE CERAMIC FORMS. FROMHOLD'S REPUTATION FOR WHIMSICAL CERAMIC SHAPES, OFTEN INCORPORATING ANIMALISTIC MOTIVES, GREW IN CALIFORNIA, WHERE HE MAINTAINED A STUDIO INTO THE 1970S.

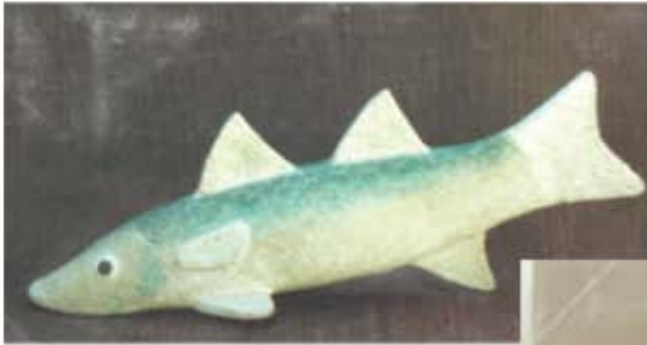
Another Bogatay Student



Howard Kottler

HENNY BOGATAY ONCE MENTIONED OVERHEARING A HEATED ARGUMENT BETWEEN BOGATAY AND AN UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN KOTTLER (1930-1989), SUGGESTING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE STUDENT AND TEACHER RELATIONSHIP. KOTTLER RECEIVED THE PH.D. FROM OSU IN 1964. SUBSEQUENTLY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON HE "HELPED TO REDEFINE THE ENTIRE FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CERAMIC ART."

Bogatay Fish



The Real: 1968,

the Not-so-real:
ca. 1963



and

... The Surreal



Bogatay Family

Dignified Whimsey



Mama-San n.d.

Bogatay Family



Jazz Singer 1957

Rago Auctions



"Nanny Goat"

1952

"Weasel" 1951

Bogatay Family



Assessment

According to Thomas C. Folk (1991) Bogatay “forever changed ‘the art with the inferiority complex;’”—i.e., ceramic sculpture. That remains a fitting epitaph. Bogatay was able to combine whimsy and seriousness to a degree seldom seen in the work of other members of the “Cleveland School,” which remains a defining characteristic of much of both his earlier and his later work.